

Tsakhur language

Tsakhur (also spelled **Tsaxur** or **Caxur**; Azerbaijani: *Saxur dili*; Russian: Цахурский, *Tsakhurskiy*) is a language spoken by the Tsakhurs in northern Azerbaijan and southwestern Dagestan (Russia). It is spoken by about 13,000 people in Azerbaijan and by about 9,770 people in Dagestan.^[3] The word *Tsakhur* derives from the name of a Dagestani village where speakers of this language make up the majority.

Although Tsakhur is endangered in communities in closest contact with Azerbaijani, it is vigorous in other communities, gaining prominence in the region, seen in the growth of interest in learning Tsakhur in school and a growing body of Tsakhur-learning materials.^[4] Tsakhur is classified as "definitely endangered" by UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger.^[5]

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Classification

Tsakhur belongs to the Lezgi group of the Northeast Caucasian language family. The Tsakhurs call their language C'aʁna miz.

History

The first written documentation of Tsakhur dates back to 1895 and is attributed to Roderich von Erckert. The first description of Tsakhur grammar was published by Adolf Dirr in 1913.^[4]

In the 1930s, a literary form of Tsakhur was developed. Starting from 1934, the language was taught in primary schools in Azerbaijan and Dagestan. In 1938, the use of literary Tsakhur in Azerbaijan was discontinued but regained its status in 1989.^[4]

The Tsakhur alphabet in Azerbaijan is based on the Latin script, whereas in Dagestan the language uses Cyrillic. In the past (as early as the 11th century) there have been attempts to write Tsakhur in the Arabic script.^[6]

In 2008, Arif Rustamov directed the first and so far only feature film in Tsakhur called *Facing Back to the Qibla*.^[7]

Geographic distribution

Tsakhur is spoken mostly in rural areas of Azerbaijan's Zaqatala and Qakh rayons, as well as mountainous parts of Dagestan's Rutul region. There are 15,900 Tsakhurs in Azerbaijan (1999 census) and 10,400 in Russia (2002 census). In 1989, 93% of them reported Tsakhur as their first language.^[4]

Official status

In Azerbaijan and Russia, Tsakhur is taught as a subject in primary schools (grades 1 to 4) in Tsakhur-populated regions. Newspapers and radio broadcast in Tsakhur are also available. It is one of twelve official languages of the Dagestan region in Russia where it is spoken. However, the language does not have an official status in Azerbaijan.^[4]

Related languages

Among the languages of the Lezgi group, Rutul appears to be the closest one to Tsakhur. Other than these two, there are eight more languages in the Lezgi group, namely: Lezgian, Tabasaran, Aghul, Budukh, Kryts, Khinalugh, Udi, and Archi.

Tsakhur	
цӀаӀхна миз , <i>ts'əxna miz</i>	
Pronunciation	/t͡sʰaˈχna miz/
Native to	Azerbaijan, Russia
Ethnicity	Tsakhurs
<div>Native speakers</div>	22,300 (2010-2011) ^[1]
<div>Language family</div>	<div>Northeast Caucasian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lezgi<ul style="list-style-type: none">Samur<ul style="list-style-type: none">Western Samur<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tsakhur</div>
<div>Writing system</div>	Latin in Azerbaijan, Cyrillic in Russia
	
Official status	
<div>Official language in</div>	 Dagestan
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	tkr
Glottolog	tsak1249 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/tsak1249) ^[2]

Phonology

Similar to many Northeast Caucasian languages, Tsakhur is known for its complex phonology and a large number of vowel phonemes (including 7 simple, 5 pharyngealized and 3 umlauted vowels). Its first in-depth phonological description was provided by Nikolai Trubetzkoy in 1931.

Consonants

The consonant inventory, according to Shulze's study of the language, of Tsakhur is shown below. Forms are phonemic unless placed in square brackets, in which case they are suspected to be phonemes but currently with incomplete evidence for this.^[8] The inventory shows some asymmetries, but exhibits series of palatalized, labialized, and pharyngealized phonemes.

		Labial	Dental			Alveolar			Palatal		Velar			Uvular			Laryngeal		
			plain	pal.	lab.	plain	pal.	lab.	plain	lab.	plain	pal.	lab.	plain	lab.	phar.	plain	lab.	phar.
Nasal		m	n	[nʲ]															
Plosive / Affricate	voiceless	p	t	[tʲ]	tʷ	ts	[tsʲ]	[tsʷ]	tʃ	tʃʷ	k	kʲ	[kʷ]	q	qʷ	qˤ			
	ejective	pʼ	tʼ	[tʲʼ]	[tʷʼ]	tsʼ	[tsʲʼ]	[tsʷʼ]	tʃʼ	tʃʷʼ	kʼ	[kʲʼ]	[kʷʼ]	qʼ	qʷʼ	qˤʼ	ʔ		ʕʼ¹
	geminate	pː	tː			tsː			[tʃːʼ]	[tʃːʷ]	kː	[kːʲ]		qː	[qːʷ]	[qːˤ]			
	voiced	b	d	dʲ		dʒ			dʒ	[dʒʷ]	g	gʲ	gʷ	ɢ	[ɢʷ]	ɢˤ			
Fricative	voiceless	f				s	[sʲ]		ʃ	[ʃʷ]	x	xʲ	xʷ	χ	χʷ	χˤ	h	[hʷ]	hˤ
	geminate					sː	[sːʲ]		ʃː	[ʃːʷ]	xː	[xːʲ]	[xːʷ]	χː	[χːʷ]	[χːˤ]			
	voiced	w¹				z	[zʲ]	[zʷ]			ʁ			ʁ	[ʁʷ]	ʁˤ			
Approximant			l	[lʲ]		r			j										

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Grammar

Tsakhur has 18 grammatical cases and has retained suffixaufnahme. Verbs may have singular and plural forms, and 7 grammatical moods. The tense system is complex. In contrast to the related languages, Tsakhur sentences can be formed by affective construction.^[6]

Noun case

Tsakhur exhibits a number of noun cases, including grammatical and local cases. The ergative and genitive cases show agreement with the head noun class, as shown below.^[8]

Case	Marker
Abslutive	- Ø
Ergative	-e(:)¹ / -(V)n²
Genitive	-(V)na³, -(V)n⁴, -(V)ni⁵
Dative	-(V)s

- 1. Human nouns
- 2. Nonhuman nouns
- 3. Head noun ABS, classes I-III
- 4. Head noun ABS, classes IV
- 5. Head noun OBL

Example inflections

Case	Sg.	Pl.	Sg.	Pl.
Abslutive	balkan	balkanar	zer	zerbæ
Ergative	balkana	balkanāšše	zeran	zerbən
Genitive	balkanana	balkanāššina	zerana	zerbəna
Dative	balkanus	balkanāššis	zerus	zerbəs
	horse		cow	

Dialects

The two major dialects of the Tsakhur language are Tsakh and Gel mets.^[4]

See also

- [Tsakhur people](#)
- [Appendix:Cyrillic script](#)
- [Northeast Caucasian languages](#)
- [Languages of Azerbaijan](#)

References

1. "Tsakhur" (<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/tkr>). *Ethnologue*. Retrieved 2018-07-31.
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Tsakhur" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/tsak1249>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
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4. The Sociolinguistic Situation of the Tsakhur in Azerbaijan (<http://www.sil.org/silesr/2005/silesr2005-016.pdf>) by John M. Clifton et al. *SIL International*, 2005
5. UNESCO Interactive Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00206>)
6. (in Russian) The Tsakhur language (<http://etheo.org/tsax01.htm>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20110726035221/http://etheo.org/tsax01.htm>) 2011-07-26 at the [Wayback Machine](#). The *ETHEO* Project. Last updated 11 October 2005. Retrieved 26 December 2006
7. *Shootings of Facing Back to the Qibla* Finished (<http://www.newsazerbaijan.ru/culture/20090401/42794361.html>). News Azerbaijan. 1 April 2009.
8. Wolfgang Schulze, *Tsakhur* (Lincom Europa, München, 1997) [ISBN 3-89586-150-2](#)

External links

- [Appendix:Cyrillic script](#)
- [Tsakhur basic lexicon at the Global Lexicostatistical Database](#) (<http://starling.rinet.ru/cgi-bin/response.cgi?root=new100&morpho=0&basename=new100\nccl\lez&first=0>)
- [Tskahur picture dictionary](http://www.shakasana.com/en/dictionaries-0) (<http://www.shakasana.com/en/dictionaries-0>)
- [Public access material related to Tsakhur in SIL International's Language and Culture Archive](http://www.sil.org/resources/search?query=tsakhur) (<http://www.sil.org/resources/search?query=tsakhur>)

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